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About the monthly Water Level bulletin

April Precipitation Over the Great Lakes

As a percentage of the long-term April average:

Great Lakes Basin	80%
Lake Erie (including Lake St. Clair)	135%
Lake Superior	55%
Lakes Michigan-Huron	76%
Lake Ontario	67%

LEVEL news

Great Lakes - St. Lawrence River Water Levels

Volume 6, Number 5 **May 5, 1998**

Problems Continue on Lower Lakes

High Water Levels Moving Down Through Basin

The high water levels that have troubled the Great Lakes since 1996 are showing some signs of working their way through the lakes and out the St. Lawrence River. While it is still much too early to say that the worst is over, there has been definite signs of improvement in the upper portions of the Basin. At the end of April, Lake Superior's level was within one centimetre (cm) of average and 25 cm lower than one year earlier, while Lake Huron was 10 cm lower than a year ago. As a result of the decline, the planned May outflow from Lake Superior is only 69 percent of last May's outflow. Unless heavy rainfall is received over the next several months, this lower outflow should result in a further reduction in Lake Huron's level compared to last year.

While the decline in levels on Lakes Superior and Huron gives cause for optimism for the future, levels are presently higher than one year ago on the lower lakes: 5 cm higher on St. Clair, 10 cm higher on Erie, and 18 cm higher on Ontario. This has increased the risk of damages to shore properties on these lakes compared to last spring. If average amounts of precipitation are received, all three lakes should be below last year's level by June, but wet weather could keep these lakes close to last year's level through the summer.

St. Lawrence River flows will be significantly above average through the remainder of spring and into the summer. Last May it was necessary to reduce the Lake Ontario discharge for a few days to accommodate high Ottawa River flows brought on by snowmelt. This action will not be necessary this month, as all the snow has melted.

Lake Ontario's Level Rises to an Early Peak Montreal Area Flooding Kept to a Minimum

A drastic reduction in Lake Ontario outflow kept flooding along the St. Lawrence River in the Montreal area to a minimum during late March and early April. Rapid snowmelt and spring rains led to very high inflows into the St. Lawrence River from the Ottawa River and other tributaries, and pushed water levels around Montreal to flood levels. In an effort to partially offset these high inflows, the discharge from Lake Ontario was reduced to as low as 4700 cubic metres per second for the first five days of April. Fortunately the high discharges from the Ottawa and other tributaries were of relatively short duration. As these flows subsided, the outflow from Lake Ontario was steadily

Note: These figures are preliminary.

April Outflows From the Great Lakes

As a percentage of the long-term April average:

Lake Superior	99%
Lake Erie	127%
Lake Huron	110%
Lake Ontario	114%

Note: These figures are preliminary.

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Summary information for "LEVEL*news*"

increased as much as possible while maintaining Lac St. Louis' level at or slightly below its critical flood level. A total of 16 flow increases were made during the month, and the outflow at month's end was 9900 cubic metres per second.

Lake Ontario's level increased rapidly during the period of reduced outflow, as expected. However, this rise in lake level slowed and then stopped as the lake's outflow increased. The combination of high outflows and dry weather during the last ten days of April led to a small decline in level at the end of the month. Overall, the increase in the lake's level from the beginning to the end of the month was average.

It appears that Lake Ontario's level has reached its peak for this year, although very heavy rainfall could push it up slightly. The peak level does not usually occur until late May or June, but the early snowmelt this year, and the high outflow from Lake Ontario anticipated for May, has moved it ahead by about a month.

Essex County Hit by Storm

The Lake Erie shoreline of Essex County suffered extensive damage during a storm on April 9. Strong easterly winds that day caused a surge in water levels of 76 centimetres at Bar Point and 54 centimetres at Kingsville. Heavy waves driven by the strong wind pounded the shoreline, causing an estimated $5 million in damages. About 100 homes and cottages were damaged during the storm.

The hardest hit area was Mersea Township between Wheatley and Point Pelee National Park. About 15 homes were damaged to the point of being uninhabitable, and the dyke at Hillman Marsh that protects agricultural and residential land from flooding was also damaged. It was necessary for several homes in the area to be evacuated, and road access was cut off at some locations due to flooding and deposition of sand.

Public Meetings Scheduled

The International St. Lawrence River Board of Control is holding a public meeting on June 16 at 7:00 p.m. at the Sackets Harbor Central School, 215 South Broad Street in Sackets Harbor, New York.

The International Lake Superior Board of Control is holding a public meeting on June 23 in South Haven, Michigan. The location has not yet been determined.

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